

United States Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
Boise District
Owyhee Field Office
20 First Ave West
Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI)
Livestock Trailing
Environmental Assessment No. DOI-BLM-ID-B030-2012-0011-EA

I have reviewed the Council on Environmental Quality Regulations (CEQ) for significance (40 CFR 1508.27) and have determined the actions analyzed in Environmental Assessment (EA) No. DOI-BLM-ID-B030 -2012-0011-EA will not have any significant impact, individually or cumulatively, on the quality of the human environment. The EA analyzes three alternatives, from which I have selected Alternative B. Alternative B was designed to lessen potential environmental effects relative to the routes originally applied for. This alternative also contains general and route-specific stipulations or Terms and Conditions that will be used to lessen potential environmental effects (Section 2.3.2, Alternative B –BLM Proposal-Trailing with Specific Terms and Conditions). Because the actions analyzed in the EA will not have any significant impact, an environmental impact statement is not required.

My finding was made after considering both the context and intensity of the effects, as described in the above EA. I considered the following factors in determining significance:

1. The activities described in the proposed action do not include any significant beneficial or adverse impacts (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(1)). The EA includes a description of the expected environmental consequences of livestock trailing.

A. There are no beneficial impacts/effects represented by Alternative B.

B. There are no significant adverse impacts in alternative Alternative B to candidate species for listing under the ESA, the expected impacts are listed here:

1. Effects on greater sage-grouse would be “minimal” and “would only potentially incur a slight decrease in the fitness of sage-grouse across the project area.” – Section 3.4.2.1.2 For cumulative impacts, “cumulative impacts from Alternative B would be less than those described for Alternative A. Although both alternatives would have only minimal direct and indirect effects and there would be no measurable impacts to sage-grouse populations, Alternative B would have even fewer consequences to sage-grouse due to the imposed timing and location restrictions.” – Section 3.8.5.2

2. For Columbia spotted frogs, “Within this trailing corridor, 26 Columbia spotted frog observations are also recorded (IFWIS 2011). “Anywhere from zero to a few individuals could be trampled in localized areas but there would be no measurable alteration to the population in the affected area.”-Section 3.4.2.2.2 For cumulative impacts, “since direct and indirect impacts are so small as to be negligible and other projects that could occur in the affected area would have no predictable negative consequences to spotted frogs, there would be no cumulative impacts to spotted frogs from this alternative beyond the aforementioned direct and indirect impacts.” – Section 3.8.5.2
 3. For Big Horn sheep, “The grazing management practices followed by the domestic sheep permittee in Alternative A, as well as IDFG BMPs, the BLM SRP and terms and conditions, would continue to be implemented under Alternative B” and “there will be no measurable direct or indirect effects to BHS populations from the implementation of Alternative B.”-Section 3.4.2.4.2 For cumulative impacts, “Direct and indirect effects from Alternative B would be the same as those resulting from Alternative A. Therefore, the minimal direct and indirect effects to bighorn sheep resulting from Alternative B would interact similarly with other ongoing and future projects in the area and there would be no measurable impacts to bighorn sheep populations in the affected area.” –Section 3.8.5.2
- C. There are no significant adverse impacts in alternative Alternative B to BLM special status species, the expected impacts are listed here:
1. For pygmy rabbits, “at most, only a few individuals could experience mortalities from collapsed burrows, with no measureable impacts to the pygmy rabbit population residing within the project area.” –Section 3.4.2.3.2 For cumulative impacts, “Direct and indirect effects from Alternative B are slightly less than those resulting from Alternative A. Therefore, the minimal direct and indirect effects to pygmy rabbits resulting from Alternative B would interact similarly with other ongoing and future projects in the area and there would be no measurable impacts to pygmy rabbit populations in the affected area.”-Section 3.8.5.2
 2. For red band trout, “anywhere from zero to a few juvenile individuals could be trampled in localized areas but there would be no measurable alteration to the population in the affected area.”-Section 3.4.2.6.2 For cumulative impacts, “cumulative impacts resulting from the implementation of Alternative B would be the same as Alternative A. Since direct and indirect impacts are so small as to be negligible and other projects that could occur in the affected area would have no predictable negative consequences to redband trout, there would be no cumulative impacts to redband trout from this alternative beyond the aforementioned direct and indirect impacts.”-Section 3.8.5.2
 3. For special status plants, “the combination of only short-term effects, a limited extent of impacts, and avoidance of many special status plant occurrences would

produce only minor negative effects on special status plant species from Alternative B.”-Section 3.2.2.2.2 For cumulative impacts, “the cumulative effects on special status plants from Alternative B would be very slight when combined with the effects of past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future activities (as described for Alternative A), and would not lead towards listing under the Endangered Species Act for any special status plant.”- Section 3.8.4.2

2. The activities included in Alternative B would not significantly affect public health or safety (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(2)).

Much of the livestock trailing would occur along and adjacent to gravel roads. The public may occasionally encounter livestock along roads during trailing activities; however, this effect would not significantly affect public health and safety because the numbers of encounters are expected to be low and the duration of the encounters would be short.

The potential for contracting Q fever was concerned extremely low and was not brought forward for further analysis. (Appendix A)

West Nile virus was discussed in the EA which states, “In Alternative B, possible enhancement of mosquito habitat would be the same as under Alternative A. As mentioned previously, trailing has occurred historically in these areas, grazing will continue to occur in these areas, and these riparian habitats represent a miniscule fraction of what exists in the affected area (~ 348 miles of perennial streams and 300 springs) so possible increases to mosquito habitat from this alternative would be minute.” –Section 3.4.2.1.2

3. The proposed activities would not significantly affect any unique characteristics (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(3)) of the geographic area such as prime and unique farmlands, caves, wild and scenic rivers, designated wilderness areas, wilderness study areas, or areas of critical concern.

No prime and unique farmlands, caves, wild and scenic rivers, wilderness study areas, or areas of critical concern are found within the trailing routes so there would be no impact

4. The activities described in Alternative B do not involve effects on the human environment that are likely to be highly controversial (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(4)). Livestock trailing is a routine activity and the effects of livestock trailing are well understood as described in Chapters 3 and 4 of the EA.

Public input was requested from affected permittees and interested publics. Meetings with trailing applicants were also conducted to understand how the applicants trailed. None of the comments received in response to scoping revealed any highly controversial issues related to the size, nature, or effects of livestock trailing activities. A summary of the comments received is included in the EA’s Appendix A.

Livestock trailing is a routine activity, and the effects of livestock trailing are well understood as described throughout Section 3.0 of the EA, Affected Environment and Environmental Consequences.

5. Livestock trailing does not involve any effects that are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(5)).

Livestock trailing has occurred throughout this area for several decades, and the effects are well understood. The EA (Section 3.0, Affected Environment and Environmental Consequences) discloses the expected environmental effects on the human environment; no unique or unknown risks have been identified.

6. My decision to authorize livestock trailing does not establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects or represent a decision in principle about a future consideration (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(6)).

There are no cumulative actions that are connected with livestock grazing and no significant cumulative impacts were identified within the EA No. DOI-BLM-ID-B030 -2012-0011-EA. Implementation of this decision would not trigger other actions, nor will it represent a decision in principle about future considerations.

7. The effects of livestock trailing would not be significant, individually or cumulatively, when considered with the effects of other actions (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(7)).

The EA discloses that no other connected or cumulative actions would cause significant cumulative impacts (throughout Section 3.0, Affected Environment and Environmental Consequences). Alternative B was designed to lessen potential environmental effects relative to the routes originally applied for. This alternative also contains general and route-specific stipulations or Terms and Conditions that will be used to lessen potential environmental effects (Section 2.3.2, Alternative B –BLM Proposal-Trailing with Specific Terms and Conditions). The cumulative effects analysis in the EA does not reveal any known significant cumulative effects. Any adverse impacts identified as a result of livestock trailing, when added to any adverse impacts of other past, present, or reasonably foreseeable future actions, would result in negligible to minor impacts to natural and cultural resources.

8. I have determined that the activities described in the proposed action will not adversely affect or cause loss or destruction of scientific, cultural, or historical resources, including those listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(8)).

Based on the proposed trailing activities, an Affected Area was identified. Past inventory efforts within the Affected Area were reviewed to identify sites that may be affected by the trailing activities. The EA (Section 3.5.2.2, Environmental Consequences – Cultural Resources) discloses that “under Alternative B, 86 known cultural sites are within trailing buffers. One of these is NRHP eligible, one is not eligible, and the rest are of undetermined eligibility”. It further states that “this alternative would eliminate potential impacts of proposed trailing on cultural resources resulting in there being no historic properties affected under this alternative.”-Section 3.5.2.2

In addition, as described in Section 3.5.2.2 “Additional Class III inventories would be conducted at select locations in the project area and some site monitoring would also be done.” Consultation with the State Historic Preservation Office was initiated on March 20, 2012, and will be completed in association with individual crossing permits.

9. Alternative B is not likely to adversely affect any endangered or threatened species or its habitat that has been determined to be critical under the Endangered Species Act (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(9)).

There are no Endangered Species or critical habitat found within the trailing routes so there would be no impact. For candidate species Greater sag-grouse, Columbia Spotted frog and Bighorn sheep they would also not be adversely affected as disclosed in Section 3.0 of the EA, Affected Environment and Environmental Consequences and section 3.8 Cumulative Effects Sections.

10. The proposed trailing activities will not threaten any violation of Federal, State, or local law or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(10)).

Chapter 1 of the EA (see Relationship to Statutes, Regulations, and Other Plans), describes how trailing activities conform to relevant laws, regulations, policies, and any relevant local permitting requirements.

<u>/s/ Peter Torma Acting Field Manger for</u>	<u>4/12/2012</u>
Lorretta V. Chandler	Date
Field Manager	
Owyhee Field Office	